



MEMORANDUM

Item 8

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
SUBJECT: Summary of Comments Received and Proposed Responses on the Off-Cycle Amendment to the 2016 Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and the Air Quality Conformity Analysis
DATE: October 18, 2017

On September 14, 2017, the draft Off-Cycle Amendment to the 2016 Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP), the draft FY 2017-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the draft Air Quality Conformity Analysis were released for a 30-day public comment and inter-agency review period. The board was briefed on the Off-Cycle CLRP Amendment, and the Air Quality Conformity Analysis at its September 20, 2017 meeting. The comment period closed on October 14, 2017.

This memorandum provides a summary of the comments received and provides recommended responses for the board's consideration. For comments received that referred to specific projects, TPB member agencies that are responsible for project implementation assisted in developing the responses. One comment was received on the four projects released for public comment prior to inclusion on the CLRP and nine comments were received on "other regional transportation issues."

Comments received on the Governor Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project

One comment was received on a project submitted for inclusion in the Off-Cycle Amendment to the CLRP. Commission President Peter Murphy submitted a letter (attached) on behalf of the Charles County Board of Commissioners expressing concern over changes to the design of the Governor Harry Nice Bridge replacement project. The letter stated that the originally proposed design included accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians, and shoulders that could serve as vehicle breakdown lanes and that proposed changes to the design would eliminate these elements. The Board of Commissioners urges that the project should include both elements, or consider a repurposed use of the existing bridge as a bicycle and pedestrian facility once the replacement bridge is complete.

Response

This project was first submitted for inclusion in the CLRP in 2010. It was scheduled to be completed in 2030, and it does not use any state or federal funding. It has since been updated to be completed in 2023 using a design build approach. The original and updated description form states that the replacement project will "construct a new four-lane bridge north of the existing bridge, with a barrier-separated, two-way bicycle/pedestrian path on the south side of the bridge."

One of the goals of the TPB's Vision is to encourage walking, bicycling, and the use of public transportation as safe, convenient, environmentally friendly, and economical modes of transportation that promote health and independence for all people. In support of this goal the TPB has adopted a Complete Street

Policy for the region which declares that “a complete street safely and adequately accommodates motorized and non-motorized users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, freight vehicles, emergency vehicles, and transit riders of all ages and abilities, in a manner appropriate to the function and context of the facility”. The Complete Street Policy strongly encourages the TPB members to adopt policies “at the local, state, regional, or federal level that ensures the safe and adequate accommodation, in all phases of project planning, development, and operations, of all users of the transportation network, including pedestrians and transit riders of all ages and abilities, bicyclists, individuals with disabilities, motorists, freight vehicles, and emergency vehicles, in a manner appropriate to the function and context of the relevant facility.” The TPB urges Maryland Department of Transportation to apply its Complete Street policy principles in the design and construction of the Harry Nice Bridge project.

The Maryland Transportation Authority’s (MDTA) funding lies outside of the Maryland Transportation Trust Fund. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has informed TPB staff that a final decision on the bicycle/pedestrian accommodations for the bridge replacement project has not been made yet; however, the MDTA board did vote to approve two foot shoulders in the final design. The final design decision, specifically related to the bicycle/pedestrian lane, rests with the MDTA Board. MDOT has advised MDTA of the current comments and suggests that further comments should be submitted to the MDTA Board and the Governor of Maryland.

Comments received on other regional transportation issues

Comments were received from nine individuals in opposition to the addition of any study of a northern Potomac River bridge crossing in the region’s Plan.

Response

A project of this nature has not been proposed for inclusion in the CLRP for construction or as a study by any agency and is not a subject of the Board’s action at this time.



Charles County Government

CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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County Administrator

October 6, 2017

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Office of the Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Request for Assistance (Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project)

Dear Governor Hogan:

I am sending this letter on behalf of the Board of Charles County Commissioners to relay some existing concerns regarding the Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project.

Currently, the Harry Nice Bridge, located on Route 301, connecting Charles County, MD and King George County, VA serves approximately 6.6 million automobiles each year and is the second oldest facility in the Maryland Transportation Authority's inventory. The Harry Nice Bridge currently consists of one lane in each direction which tends to create major backups when there are accidents on the bridge. At this time bicycles and pedestrians have no access to usage of this bridge.

Initially, the Maryland Transportation Authority had planned to include a bicycle/pedestrian lane and road shoulders wide enough to accommodate vehicle breakdowns in the replacement bridge. However, recently it was announced that those plans had changed and there would no longer be vehicle breakdown lanes on the new bridge and possibly not a bicycle/pedestrian lane. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to build a bicycle and pedestrian connection across the lower Potomac, the only connection south of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. It is a connection that could serve as an important link between Maryland and Virginia.

It is understood that cost is a factor in the addition of the bicycle/pedestrian and vehicle breakdown lanes, however, this bridge is being built as a 100 year bridge and should be built with the idea of making it to better serve our citizens, both those in vehicles as well as those who chose to travel on bicycle or by foot. Without the addition of these additional lanes, it is thought that the new bridge will not help relieve the congestion that is

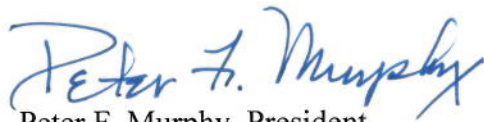
October 6, 2017

currently being seen on this bridge, especially during high peak travel times. We must continue to improve the quality of life that our residents deserve and look forward to.

Please do not consider any options that fail to include pedestrian/bicycle access and breakdown lanes. A possible "Green" option would be to consider keeping and repurposing the existing Harry Nice Bridge as a Bike/Pedestrian Walkway over the Potomac alongside the newly constructed Harry Nice Bridge. We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and request your assistance with achieving the desired outcome.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,



Peter F. Murphy, President
Charles County Board of Commissioners